

# APA May/June 2015 Newsletter

## APA Prepares for Bargaining a Successor Contract

*by Maury Koffman, APA President*

Per Article VII of the APA Constitution and Bylaws, the APA must begin preparations to negotiate a successor agreement by naming our Negotiations Committee in January of the year our current contract is set to expire.

Noting our current collective bargaining agreement is in force from October 1, 2011, to September 30, 2015, the APA Executive Board has appointed a cross-section of more than 20 APA members to serve on the Negotiations Committee.

As you likely recall, the APA negotiated and ratified our wage and health care agreement, which is in effect through 2017 – 2018, that ensures the opportunity for wage increases each year as well as fully funded health care for the base plan.

Therefore, base wage increases and health care will not be a topic of negotiation for the upcoming bargaining.

The APA anticipates negotiations with MSU to begin in late summer. Prior to that time, the APA will be engaging and soliciting membership input for bargaining through surveys, feedback forums, and email. Ultimately, any tentative agreement reached at the bargaining table must be brought to a vote of the entire APA membership for ratification.

Be sure to watch official APA ListServ messages regarding contract input surveys and open meeting dates prior to and during the 2015 bargaining cycle. This is your union so your input is greatly appreciated!

## Questions From The Trenches

For this installment of APA Questions From The Trenches, we asked APA President Maury Koffman to answer a potpourri of questions that members have brought to his attention recently.

### **I have been informed that my workspace will be relocated through a department reorganization. How is the decision made where my new workspace will be located?**

The University, as the employer, retains the right to determine your office workspace under prevailing law and the APA contract. However, any decision must be reasonable and in most reorganizations, APs are asked for their input before a final decision is made. The APA is able to assist in reaching a mutual resolution to your office space as it has an overall impact on your daily work environment and can impact your ability to perform your work responsibilities.

### **I have been asked to wear specific clothing during the workday. Can my supervisor and the University require specific attire to be worn in the workplace?**

There is precedent that the University can have a reasonable expectation that employees wear appropriate, professional attire in the workplace. However, the approach must be uniformly applied.

### **I have been offered another job on campus. How much notice must I give before resigning my current position?**

There is no length of notice requirement to resign from your current position. The APA encourages providing as much notice as possible with the standard of two weeks notice if your calendar for transition allows.

### **If I leave MSU employment prior to 25 years of service, do I retain the total balance of my 403(b) retirement account including the MSU contribution?**

Yes. The APA is proud to have negotiated a vibrant retirement plan. Employee contributions are 5% and University contributions are 10% of the employee's base annual salary. The money contributed to your 403(b) plan vests immediately and goes with you at any time you conclude your employment relationship with MSU.

### **I have questions about our APA bargained retirement plan administered through MSU. Who can I contact for more information?**

There is an FAQ on the MSU HR website at <http://www.hr.msu.edu/benefits/retirement> that provides more information around our retirement plan. Additionally, you can contact the retirement office via phone at 517.353.4434 or via email at [benefitsinfo@hr.msu.edu](mailto:benefitsinfo@hr.msu.edu).

## Know Your Rights: What isn't in your contract?

*by Melissa Sortman, MEA Uniserv Director*

There are many employment laws governing your work environment that are not referenced in the collective bargaining agreement. For APA members, these laws are enforced by APA/MEA and covered under the MEA Legal Representation Policy at no cost to a member.

A brief overview of FMLA from the Department of Labor reviews the basics of FMLA and its purpose:

The FMLA entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave.

Eligible employees are entitled to:

Twelve workweeks of leave in a 12-month period for:

- the birth of a child and to care for the newborn child within one year of birth;
- the placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care and to care for the newly placed child within one year of placement;
- to care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition;
- a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his or her job;
- any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a covered military member on "covered active duty;" or Twenty-six workweeks of leave during a single 12-month period to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness if the eligible employee is the service member's spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin (military caregiver leave). Family and

Medical Leave Act

<http://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/>

The University runs the FMLA year on the fiscal year, July 1-June 30 each year. The FMLA leave runs concurrently with your sick leave if the illness or family illness is covered by FMLA and you have filled out the paperwork and it has been accepted. To apply for FMLA, you need to contact MSU Human Resource Total Compensation and Wellness Leaves Office to talk to a Benefit Leave Advisor. Some of the forms can be found online and by contacting Human Resources (517) 353-4434.

<http://www.hr.msu.edu/timoffleave/FMLAForms.htm>

APA leaders and staff are able to assist members through the process and enforce employee rights under FMLA. In addition, there may also be employee protections that

can be provided by enforcing the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA is also covered by the MEA Legal Representation Policy for members.

APA frequently receives inquiries into the application of Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) by the University. If you are contacted by the MSU Leave Office regarding the denial of medical certification for FMLA or are being asked to go to get a second medical opinion, please call the APA Office for assistance, (517) 999-4004 or [msuapa@msu.edu](mailto:msuapa@msu.edu).

## Your Fellow APs

*Interview by Laura Wise, APA Executive Board*

This month we feature Amber Cordell, Educational Programs Manager for The Office for International Students and Scholars

### **How long have you been at MSU?**

*7 years.*

### **Have you been a member of APA the whole time?**

*Yes!*

### **Can you tell me a little bit about what you do?**

*I am the Educational Programs Manager in the Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS). I coordinate orientation for our international students and organize year-round cultural and educational programs. I am the liaison to all international Registered Student Organizations and am the advisor of the International Students Association (ISA). I facilitate leadership retreats and intercultural communication workshops for domestic and international students, faculty, staff and community members. I also serve as a consultant to many departments who strive to understand and meet the needs of our 8,000 international students from 130 countries! In other words, I have the coolest and most fun and rewarding job on campus!*

### **What brought you to your job at MSU?**

*The honest answer to this question is a “man, but that’s a long story”. After teaching English in Japan for 3 years, I knew I wanted to help university students from around the world and to have a positive, transformative impact on young people’s lives. MSU is ranked in the top 10 for international student enrollment and study abroad participation, and our Office for International Students and Scholars has a great reputation in the field of international education. What an honor it is to work in this office and on this campus with such diverse students who teach me so much every day!*

### **What do you love about working at MSU?**

*I love MSU’s diversity, the wealth of opportunities and resources available, the beautiful scenery in all four seasons and collaborating with my awesome partners across campus on programs that make a real difference. Most importantly, I love my OISS co-workers who have become my family.*

### **What do you like to do when you are not at work?**

*I like traveling the world, walking on our gorgeous campus, attending cultural and fine art events, taking photos, and singing karaoke!*

## **APA 2015 Annual Picnic**

This is a reminder that the APA Annual Picnic will be held later this week on Wednesday, May 27, 2015. This member event will be held at Patriarche Park at 1100 Alton Street in East Lansing from 4:30pm to 7:00pm under the picnic pavilion.

Relax, network, and have fun! Food and beverages will be provided. Bring the whole family to the festivities. There will be fun activities for kids of all ages.

We hope to see you there!